

Message Text

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44

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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USIA FOR IEU/MCLAUGHLIN

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SUBJECT: PROHIBITION ON NEWS ABOUT THE MILITARY

REF: LISBON 5272 DTG 091237Z SEP 75

SUMMARY: IN AN EFFORT TO SHORE UP MILITARY DISCIPLINE,
WHICH HAD SUFFERED BADLY AS VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF THE MILITARY
PARTICIPATED ACTIVELY IN NATIONAL POLITICS, THE PORTUGUESE
GOVERNMENT YESTERDAY TOOK THE CONTROVERSIAL STEP OF
PROHIBITING THE MEDIA FROM CARRYING ANY NEWS ITEMS
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ABOUT THE MILITARY EXCEPT OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUE. END SUMMARY

1. PROHIBITION CONTEXT: AFTER WEEKS IN WHICH THE MEDIA CARRIED A STREAM OF POLITICALLY ORIENTED COMMUNIQUEES FROM GROUPS OF SERGEANTS AND OTHER GROUPS OF MILITARY MEN WHO HELD ONE POLITICAL POINT OF VIEW OR ANOTHER, THE GOP HAS PROHIBITED PUBLICATION OF ALL BUT OFFICIAL GOP POLICY BY SPECIFICALLY AUTHORIZED SOURCES.

2. CONTROVERSY: THE GOP'S DECISION WILL HAVE WIDE AND VARYING REPERCUSSIONS. THE COMMUNIST-CONTROLLED RADIO CLUBE PORTUGUES OF LISBON IMMEDIATELY ATTACKED THE POLICY IN AN EDITORIAL AIRED EARLY SEPT. 9, SAYING: "THERE IS NO DEMOCRACY WITHOUT DISCUSSION, WITHOUT TRUTH, WITHOUT FREEDOM OF INFORMATION. THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL HAS OPENED THE DOORS OF THE COUNTRY TO RUMOR-MONGERING."

3. HERewith TEXT OF COMMUNIQUE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC AND THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL:
"LAW APPROVED AT THE MEETING OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL ON SEPT. 8, 1975, WHICH READS AS FOLLOWS:
"THE RECENT CRISIS OF THE PORTUGUESE POLITICAL PROCESS REVEALED, ONCE AGAIN AND IN A PARTICULARLY CLEAR WAY, THE HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY THE COMMUNICATION MEDIA HAVE IN EXPLAINING AND MAKING CLEAR PUBLIC OPINION. YET, THE CRISIS REFERRED TO ALSO REVEALED THAT THE MEDIA DID NOT ALWAYS CARRY OUT THEIR IMPORTANT ROLE IN A DIRECT AND RESPONSIBLE WAY.
"THE POLITICAL PLAN OF ACTION -- PRODUCED IN A POLITICAL SITUATION WHICH WAS NOT AS YET AS GRAVE AS IT HAS NOW BECOME -- REFERRED TO THE INFORMATION MEDIA, OBSERVING THE NECESSITY FOR THEM AND STATING THE WISH THAT THEY WOULD BE TRUTHFUL AND INSTRUCTIVE, CLARIFYING THINGS FOR AND TEACHING THE PEOPLE, AND NOT UPSETTING AND CONFUSING THEM, AS THEY HAVE DONE AT TIMES UP TO NOW.
"THIS DOCUMENT DOES NOT SEEK TO DISREGARD, EVEN IN THE SLIGHTEST, A LEGITIMATE VARIETY OF OPINIONS. WHAT IT SEEKS TO DO IS TO PREVENT ACTIONS WHICH AFFECT THE COHESION, THE DISCIPLINE, AND THE DIGNITY OF THE ARMED FORCES. AND (TO PREVENT THAT) SUCH ACTIONS, WHICH BESIDES PROVOKING CONFUSION AND ALARM AMONG THE PEOPLE, PRODUCING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WITHIN THE POPULATION A LOSS OF SPIRIT AND CONFIDENCE, ALSO CAUSE HIGHLY TROUBLESOME SITUATIONS WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES THEMSELVES, BRINGING ABOUT NEEDLESS CONFLICTS AND ARTIFICIALLY EXPLOITING LEGITIMATE DIFFERENCES OF OPINION. SUCH ACTIONS, IN SUM, SERVE AS INSTRUMENTS FOR THOSE WHO WOULD UNDERMINE THE UNITY OF THE ARMED FORCES, WHICH TODAY MORE THAN EVER GUARANTEE NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE AND SERVE THE REVOLUTION.

"THUS, THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL UNDER THE AUTHORITY GRANTED IT BY ARTICLE 60 OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL LAW NO. 5/75 OF MARCH 14, DECREES AND I PROMULGATE THE FOLLOWING CONSTITUTIONAL LAW:

"ARTICLE 1: 1. MEDIA ARE PROHIBITED FROM PUBLISHING NEWS OF ANY OCCURRENCES WITHIN MILITARY UNITS OR OFFICES OR NEWS ABOUT VIEWPOINTS OF MILITARY INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS. 2. PUBLICATION ALSO IS PROHIBITED OF ANY COMMUNIQUEs, MOTIONS OR DOCUMENTS OF SIMILAR CONTENT REGARDING EVENTS OR VIEWPOINTS REFERRED TO IN THE PREVIOUS ITEM, UNLESS THEY ARE RELEASED BY ONE OF THE FOLLOWING ENTITIES: A) THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC; B) THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL; C) THE ARMED FORCES CHIEF OF STAFF; D) THE NAVY CHIEF OF STAFF; E) THE ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF; F) THE AIR FORCE CHIEF OF STAFF; G) THE COPCON COMMANDER.

"ARTICLE 2: 1. VIOLATIONS OF THE PREVIOUSLY STATED PROHIBITIONS WILL BE PUNISHED BY SUSPENSION (OF PUBLICATION) FOR TEN DAYS OR, IF THE ORGAN IN QUESTION IS NOT A DAILY ONE, OF FORTY DAYS. 2. SUCH PUNISHMENT WILL BE APPLIED BY RESOLUTION OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL, FOLLOWING A HEARING AT WHICH THE DIRECTOR OF THE MEDIA ELEMENT IN QUESTION MUST BE PRESENT. 3. APPLICATION OF THIS PUNISHMENT DOES NOT PREJUDICE THE NORMAL CIVIL AND CRIMINAL PROCEDURES CURRENTLY IN EFFECT.

"ARTICLE 3: THIS LAW ENTERS INTO EFFECT IMMEDIATELY."

4. COMMENT: THE MFA HAS SOUGHT BEFORE TO CONTAIN PUBLIC POLITICAL STATEMENTS FROM MILITARY ELEMENTS, BUT NEVER SUCCESSFULLY AND NEVER IN SUCH A FORMAL WAY. THIS EFFORT TO CONSOLIDATE CONTROL STRENGTHENS THE HAND OF WHICHEVER POLITICAL LINE MAY HAVE THE ASCENDANCY OF THE MOMENT; THUS AT PRESENT IT WILL FAVOR "MODERATES." THE BIG QUESTION IS WHETHER THE MEDIA WILL RESPECT THE PROHIBITION AFTER THEIR FREE-FOR-ALL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HEYDAY SINCE THE REVOLUTION, AND, IF NOT, WHETHER THE GOP CAN MAKE ITS RULING STICK.
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